اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 23 Al-Muminun

سُوْرَةُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ

(23-1) The believers have indeed attained true success: [1]

(1) “Believers”, who have attained true success, are those who have accepted the message of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and have acknowledged him as their guide and followed the way of life taught by him.

This assertion cannot be fully appreciated unless one keeps in view the background in which it was made. On the one hand, there were the well-to-do and prosperous chiefs of Makkah, the opponents of Islam, whose business was thriving and who were enjoying every good thing of life, and on the other hand, there were the followers of Islam, majority of whom were either poor from the beginning, or had been reduced to poverty by ruthless antagonism to Islam. Therefore, the assertion: Most certainly the believers have attained true success, with which the discourse begins, was meant to tell the disbelievers that the criterion of success and failure that they had in mind was not correct. It was based on misconceptions besides being transitory and limited in nature: it led to failure and not true success. On the contrary, the followers of Muhammad (peace be upon him), whom they regarded as failures, were truly successful, because by accepting the invitation to the right guidance given by the Messenger of Allah, they had struck a bargain which would lead them to true success and everlasting bliss in this world as well as in the Hereafter, whereas by rejecting the message the opponents had incurred loss and would meet with the evil consequences both in this world and in the next.

This is the main theme of the Surah and the whole discourse, from the beginning to the end, is meant to impress the same.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾

(23-2) those who, [2] in their Prayers, humble themselves; [3]

(2) The noble characteristics of the believers pointed out in (Verses 2-9)are the arguments to prove the above assertion. In other words, it has been stated that people with such and such traits and qualities only can attain true success in this world and in the Hereafter.

(3) Khashiun in the text is from khushu (to bow down, to express humility) which is a condition of the heart as well as of the body. Khushu of the heart is to fear and stand in awe of a powerful person and khushu of the body is to bow his head and lower his gaze and voice in his presence. In Salat one is required to show khushu both of the heart and of the body, and this is the essence of the Prayer. It has been reported that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) once saw a person offering his Prayer as well as playing with his beard, he remarked: If he had khushu in his heart, his body would have manifested it.

Though khushu is actually a condition of the heart, as stated by the above tradition, it is manifested by the body as a matter of course. The Shariah has enjoined certain etiquette which, on the one hand, helps produce khushu in the heart, and on the other, helps sustain the physical act of the Prayer in spite of the fluctuating condition of the heart. According to this etiquette, one should neither turn to the right or left, nor raise his head to look up, One may, however, look around from the corner of the eye, but as far as possible, he must fix the gaze on the place where the forehead would rest in prostration. One is also forbidden to shift about, incline sideways, fold the garments or shake off dust from them. It is also forbidden that while going down for prostration, one should clean the place where he would

sit or perform prostration. Similarly it is disrespectful that one should stand stuffy erect, recite the verses of the Quran in a loud resounding voice, or sing them, or belch or yawn repeatedly and noisily. It has also not been approved that one should offer the Prayer in a hurry. The injunction is that each article of the Prayer should be performed in perfect peace and tranquility, and unless one article has been completely performed, the next should not be begun. If one feels hurt by something during the Prayer, he may cast it aside by one hand, but moving the hand repeatedly or using both the hands for the purpose is prohibited. Along with this etiquette of the body, it is also important that one should avoid thinking irrelevant things during the Prayer. If thoughts come to the mind without one's intention, it is a natural human weakness, but one should try his utmost that the mind and heart are wholly turned towards Allah, and the mind is in full harmony and tune with the tongue, and as soon as one becomes conscious of irrelevant thoughts, he should immediately turn the attention to the Prayer.

وَ الَّذِ ينَ عَنِ اللَّ هِ مُ غرِضُ ﴿٣﴾

(23-3) who avoid whatever is vain and frivolous; (4)

(4) Literally, laghv is anything nonsensical, meaningless and vain, which is in no way conducive to achieving one's goal and purpose in life. The believers pay no heed to such useless things and they show no inclination or interest for them. If by chance they see such things being indulged in, they keep away and avoid them scrupulously, or treat them with utmost indifference. This attitude has been described in (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 72), thus: If they have to pass by what is vain, they pass by like dignified people.

This is indeed one of the outstanding characteristics of the believer. He is a person who feels the burden of responsibility at all times. He regards the world as a place of test, and the life as the limited time allowed for the test. This feeling makes him behave seriously and responsibly throughout life just like the student who is taking an exam with his whole mind and body and soul absorbed in it. Just as the student knows and feels that each

moment of the limited time at his disposal is important and decisive for his future life, and is not inclined to waste it, so the believer also spends each moment of his life on works which are useful and productive in their ultimate results. So much so that even in matters of recreation and sport, he makes a choice of only those things which prepare him for higher ends in life and do not result in mere wastage of time. For him time is not something to be killed but used profitably and productively.

Besides this, the believer is a person who possesses a right thinking mind, pure nature and fine taste. He has no inclination to indecent things. He can talk useful and healthy things but cannot indulge in idle talk. He has a fine taste of humor, but is not given to jesting, joking, ridicule, etc. nor can he endure dirty jokes and fun. For him a society in which the ears are never immune from abusive language, back-biting, slander; lying, dirty songs and indecent talk is a source of torture and agony. A characteristic of the promised Paradise is: Therein you will not hear anything vain or useless.

وَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِلزَّكٰوةِ فٰعِلُوْنَ ۙ﴿۴﴾

(23-4) who observe Zakah; [5]

(5) The word Zakat literally means purification and development, to help something grow up smoothly and develop without obstruction. As an Islamic term, it implies both the portion of wealth taken out for the purpose of purifying the rest of wealth and the act of purification itself. The words of the original text mean that the believer constantly practices purification. Thus the meaning is not confined to the paying off of Zakat dues only but it is extended to self purification which includes purification of morals as well as wealth, property and life in general. Then it does not mean purification of one's own self, but includes the purification of the lives of other people as well. So the verse means: The believers are the people who purify themselves as well as others. This thing has also been stated at other places in the Quran, for instance: Successful is he who practiced purification and remembered his Lord and prayed. (Surah Al-Ala, Ayats

14-15). And: Successful is he who purified himself and failure is he who corrupted it. (Surah Ash-Shams, Ayats 9-10). But this verse is more comprehensive in meaning because it stresses the purification of both society and one's own person.

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ ہُمۡ لِفُرُوۡجِہِمۡ حٰفِظُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۵﴾

(23-5) who strictly guard their private parts [6]

(6) They are modest in every sense of the word. They are free from sex abuse and sex perversion. They are so modest that they even conceal those parts of their bodies which the law forbids to expose before others. For explanation, see (E.Ns 30 and 32 of Surah An-Noor).

اِلَّا عَلٰۤی اَزۡوَاجِہِمۡ اَوۡ مَا مَلَکَتۡ اَیۡمَانُہُمۡ فَاِنَّہُمۡ غَیۡرُ مَلُوۡمِیۡنَ ۚ﴿۶﴾

(23-6) save from their wives, or those whom their right hands possess; for with regard to them they are free from blame "

فَمَنِ ابۡتَغٰی وَرَآءَ ذٰلِکَ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الۡعٰدُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۷﴾

(23-7) As for those who seek beyond that, they are transgressors" [7]

(7) This is a parenthesis which is meant to remove the common misunderstanding that sex desire is an evil thing in itself and satisfying it even in lawful ways is not desirable, particularly for the righteous and godly people. This misunderstanding would have been strengthened, had it been only said that the believers guard their private parts scrupulously, because it would have implied that they live unmarried lives, away from the world, like monks and hermits. Therefore a parenthesis has been added to say that there is nothing wrong in satisfying the sex desire in lawful ways. What is evil is that one should transgress the prescribed limits for satisfying the sex desire.

Here are briefly a few injunctions which are based on this parenthetical clause.

(1) Two categories of women have been excluded from the general command of guarding the private parts: (a) wives, (b) women who are legally in one's possession, i.e. slavegirls. Thus the verse clearly lays down the law that one is allowed to have sexual relations with his slave-girl as with his wife. The basis being possession and not marriage. If marriage had been the condition, the slave-girl also would have been included among the wives, and there was no need to mention them separately. Some modern commentators, who dispute the permissibility of having sexual relations with the slave-girl, argue from (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 25) to prove that one can have sexual relations with a slave-girl only after entering wedlock with her, because that verse enjoins that if a person cannot afford to marry a free Muslim woman, he may marry a Muslim slave-girl. But these commentators have a strange characteristic. They accept a part of a verse if it suits them, but conveniently ignore another part of the same verse if it goes against their wish and whim. The law about marrying the slave-girls as enunciated in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 25) reads: You may marry them with the permission of their guardians and give them their fair dowries. Obviously the person under reference here is not the master of the slave-girl himself but the person who cannot afford to marry a free Muslim woman, and therefore, wants to marry a slave-girl, who is in the possession of another person. For if the question had been of marrying his own slave-girl, who would then be the guardian whose permission would have to be sought? Then, the interpretation they give of this verse contradicts other verses dealing with the same subject in the Quran. A sincere person who wants to understand the Quranic law in this regard should study (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 3, 25); (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayats 50, 52), and (Surah Al-Maarij Ayat 30) together with this verse of Al-Mominoon. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 44 of Surah An-Nisa)

(2) The law prescribed in the parenthesis is only applicable to men as is clear from the text. A woman in the time of Umar did not understand this fine point of the language and indulged in sexual gratification with her slave. When her case was

brought before the consultative body of the companions, they gave the unanimous decision: She misinterpreted the Book of Allah. Nobody should entertain the doubt that if this exception is meant for the men only, how could then the husbands become lawful for the wives? This doubt is unjustified because when the husbands are exempted from the command of guarding their private parts in regard to their wives, the wives automatically stand exempted from the command with regard to their husbands, and there is no need to grant them exemption separately. Thus the command of exemption remains applicable and effective only in respect of the man and the woman legally in his possession, and the slave becomes unlawful for the woman possessing him. The wisdom of why the slave has been forbidden to the woman is that he can only satisfy her sexual desire but cannot become guardian and governor of herself and her household, which leaves a serious flaw in the family life.

(3) The sentence “Then whoever seeks beyond that, so it is they who are the transgressors” has made satisfaction of sex desire in other ways unlawful, whether it be through fornication, homosexuality, sex gratification with animals, or some other means. The jurists differ only with regard to masturbation. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal regards it as lawful, but Imams Malik and Shafai regard it as absolutely unlawful: and though the Hanafites also regard it as unlawful, they give the opinion that if a person indulges sometimes in masturbation under the fit of passion, it is expected that he will be forgiven the error.

(4) Some commentators have proved the prohibition of mutah (temporary marriage) from this verse. They argue that the woman with whom one has entered into wedlock temporarily, can neither be regarded as a wife nor a slavegirl. She is obviously not a slave-girl, and she is also not a wife, because the legal injunctions normally applicable to the wife are not applicable to her. She cannot inherit the wealth of the man. Likewise, the man cannot inherit her wealth. She is neither governed by the law pertaining to Iddah (waiting period after divorce or death of husband), divorce, subsistence, nor by that pertaining to the vow by man that he will not have conjugal relations with her, false accusation, etc. She is also excluded from

the prescribed limit of four wives. Thus, when she is neither a wife nor a slave-girl in any sense, she will naturally be included among those “beyond this”, whose seeker has been declared as a “transgressor” by the Quran.

This is a strong argument but due to a weakness in it, it is difficult to say that this verse is decisive with regard to the prohibition of mutah. The fact is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) enjoined the final and absolute prohibition of mutah in the year of the conquest of Makkah, but before it mutah was allowed according to several authentic traditions. If mutah had been prohibited in this verse, which was admittedly revealed at Makkah, several years before the migration, how can it be imagined that the Prophet (peace be upon him) kept the prohibition in abeyance till the conquest of Makkah? The correct position therefore is that prohibition of mutah is not based on any express law of the Quran but is based on the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Had it not been prohibited by the Sunnah, it would have been difficult to declare it as prohibited only on the authority of this verse.
It would be worth-while to clarify two other points in connection with mutah:

(a) Its prohibition is based on the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and therefore it is wrong to say that it was prohibited by Umar. As a matter of fact, Umar only enforced it as a law of Islam and publicised it among the people. This had not been done earlier because the Prophet (peace be upon him) had forbidden mutah only during the latter part of his worldly life.

(b) The Shiite view that mutah is absolutely lawful and permissible has no sanction and support in the Quran or Sunnah. The fact is that a few of the companions, their followers and jurists who regarded it permissible in the early days of Islam, did so only in case of extreme necessity and need. None of them held the view that it was absolutely lawful like marriage and could be practised in normal circumstances. Abdullah bin Abbas, who is generally cited as a prominent supporter of the view of permissibility, has himself explained his position thus: It is just

like carrion which is lawful for a person only in extreme necessity. Even Ibn Abbas had to revise his opinion when he saw that people were abusing permissibility and had started practising mutah freely regardless of genuine need and necessity. Again, even if the question, whether Ibn Abbas and the few likeminded jurists had revised their opinion or not, is ignored, the fact is that the supporters of mutah allow it only in case of extreme necessity. Holding mutah as absolutely permissible, practising it without any real necessity, or resorting to it even when one has a legally wedded wife or wives is a kind of licence which is abhorred by good taste, much less it be attributed to the Shariah of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and imputed to the learned jurists of his family. I think that among the Shiite Muslims themselves no respectable person would like that somebody should ask for the hand of his daughter or sister not in marriage but for the purpose of mutah. For, if mutah is held as absolutely permissible, it would imply that there should exist in society a low class of women, like the prostitutes, who should be available for the purpose as and when required, or if not that, mutah be restricted to the daughters and sisters of the poor stratum of society and the well-to-do be given the freedom and right to exploit them as and when they like. Can such an injustice and discrimination be expected of the divine law? And will Allah and His Messenger permit an act which every respectable woman would regard not only disgraceful for herself but shameful, too?

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ ہُمۡ لِاَمٰنٰتِہِمۡ وَ عَہۡدِہِمۡ رٰعُوۡنَ ۸

(23-8) who are true to their trusts and their covenants, (8)

(8) The believers fulfill the terms of the trusts which are placed in their charge. In this connection it should be noted that the Arabic word amanat is very comprehensive and includes all those trusts which are placed in their charge by Allah or society or individuals. Likewise aahd includes all those compacts, pledges, and promises which are made between Allah and man, and man and man. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself used to impress the importance of the fulfillment of pledges in his

addresses: The one, who does not fulfil the terms of his trust, has no faith, and the one, who does not keep promises and pledges has no Islam. (Baihaqi). According to a tradition reported both by Bukhari and Muslim, he said: Four characteristics are such that if a person has all four in him, he is beyond any doubt a hypocrite, and the one who has one of these, is a hypocrite to that extent till he gives it up:

(a) When something is placed in his trust, he commits breach of the trust.
(b) When he speaks, he tells a lie.
(c) When he makes a promise, he breaks it.
(d) When he has a quarrel with somebody, he exceeds all limits (of decency and morality).

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ ہُمۡ عَلٰى صَلَوٰتِہِمۡ يُحَافِظُوۡ نَ ۝٩

(23-9) and who guard their Prayers. (9)

(9) Salawat is plural of Salat. In (Verse 2) the act of Salat itself was implied, but here the plural number implies the individual Prayers offered in their own times. They strictly guard their Prayers: they strictly adhere to the prescribed times of the Prayers: they perform them with due regard for their pre-requisites, conditions and articles with clean body and dress and necessary ablutions: they do not regard their Prayers as an unnecessary burden, which has to be cast off somehow: they do not recite mechanically but understand what they recite and are conscious that they are supplicating to their Lord like humble servants.

اُولٰٓئِكَ ہُمُ الۡوٰرِثُوۡنَ ۝١٠

(23-10) Such are the inheritors

الَّذِيۡنَ يَرِثُوۡنَ الۡفِرۡدَوۡسَ ؕ ہُمۡ فِيۡہَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ۝١١

(23-11) that shall inherit Paradise; (10) and in it they shall abide for ever. (11)

(10) Firdaus (Paradise) is a common word found in almost all human languages in very nearly similar forms. It means a vast garden adjoining the dwelling of a person and enclosed by defence walls and containing all kinds of fruit trees, especially vines. In some languages, the word has the sense of containing pet birds and animals, too. Firdaus was in common use in pre-Islamic Arabic literature. The Quran, however, has used it for a plurality of gardens as in (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 107). This gives the idea that Firdaus is a vast place containing a great number of gardens, vineyards, etc. The inheritance of Paradise by believers has been explained in detail in (E.N. 83 of Surah TaHa) and (E.N. 99 of Surah Al- Anbiya).

(11) The substance of this passage may be summed up in four parts for further understanding of the Surah:

(1) The above mentioned excellent qualities of the believers are not confined to any race, nation or country.

(2) These excellences can be attained only by sincere faith and excellent moral qualities, and by the observance of prescribed laws in all the aspects of life.

(3) True success is not confined to transitory worldly and material prosperity but it comprises both success in this life and in the life after death in the Hereafter, and is attained by sincere faith and righteous deeds. This is a fundamental principle which cannot be falsified either by the worldly success of the evil-doers or by the temporary failure of the righteous people.

(4) Let us reiterate that these excellent characteristics of the believers have been presented as a practical proof of the truth of the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him), for these were the result of its acceptance. This should be kept in mind in the study of the succeeding passages, wherein the same subject has been pursued from different angles. This will also help to show the connection between this and the succeeding passages.

وَ لَقَدۡ خَلَقۡنَا الۡاِنۡسَانَ مِنۡ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنۡ طِيۡنٍ ﴿۱۲﴾

(23-12) We created man out of the extract of clay,

ثُمَّ جَعَلۡنٰهُ نُطۡفَةً فِىۡ قَرَارٍ مَّكِيۡنٍ ۖ﴿۱۳﴾

(23-13) then We made him into a drop of life-germ, then We placed it in a safe depository,

ثُمَّ خَلَقۡنَا النُّطۡفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقۡنَا الۡعَلَقَةَ مُضۡغَةً فَخَلَقۡنَا الۡمُضۡغَةَ عِظٰمًا فَكَسَوۡنَا الۡعِظٰمَ لَحۡمًا ۤ
ثُمَّ اَنۡشَاۡنٰهُ خَلۡقًا اٰخَرَ ؕ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحۡسَنُ الۡخٰلِقِيۡنَ ؕ﴿۱۴﴾

(23-14) then We made this drop into a clot, then We made the clot into a lump, then We made the lump into bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, (12) and then We caused it to grow into another creation. (13) Thus Most Blessed is Allah, the Best of all those that create. (14)

(12) For explanation see (E.Ns 5, 6 and 9 of Surah Al-Hajj).

(13) Now let the disbelievers consider the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him) by observing their own creation, for this will convince them of its truth by proving its doctrine of Tauhid. The origin of man is from a mere inanimate sperm-drop, which undergoes several changes in the womb of the mother. But after this, when it sees the light of the day, it is quite a different creation from the embryo in the womb. Now it can hear, it can see, and in due course of time it can talk and think. Then, when he reaches adulthood and maturity, he is capable of performing wonderful deeds. It is obvious that Allah alone could create all these characteristics in an inanimate sperm-drop.

(14) The various stages of the creation of man have been cited to prove that Allah is All-Blessed and there is no human language which can describe the praise of which He is worthy, as if to say: That Allah Who is able to develop an essence of clay into a perfect man, does not have any partner in His Godhead. Moreover, He has the power to raise him up again after his death, and is capable of working even greater wonders.

ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمۡ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۱۵﴾

(23-15) Thereafter you are destined to die,

ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمۡ مَّيِّتُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾

(23-16) and then on the Day of Resurrection you shall certainly be raised up.

وَ لَقَدۡ خَلَقۡنَا فَوۡقَكُمۡ سَبۡعَ طَرَآئِقَ ۚ وَ مَا كُنَّا عَنِ الۡخَلۡقِ غٰفِلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۷﴾

(23-17) We have indeed fashioned above you seven paths.[15] Never were We unaware of the task of creation. [16]

(15) The original Arabic word taraiq has more than one meaning. It may refer to the paths of the seven planets, with which the man of the time of the revelation of the Quran was familiar, or to the seven heavens. It should be noted that this word has not been used as a modern scientific term, but as a common word according to the Arabic usage of the period in order to invite the people's attention to the wonders of the heavens, whose creation is certainly a greater thing than the creation of men. (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 57).

(16) This may also be translated as: We were not nor are heedless of Our creation. According to the first translation, it will mean that the whole of the creation has been brought about in a perfect manner with a definite design and purpose. For Allah, their Creator, is perfect in every respect. The creation itself a proof that it is not the work of a novice or an inexpert. All the physical laws of the entire system of the universe are so closely interconnected as to prove that it is the creation of the All-Wise Allah. If we take the second translation, it will mean that Allah has not been heedless in making provisions for every thing according to its nature from the most insignificant to the greatest of all.

وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءًۢ بِقَدَرٍ فَاَسۡكَنّٰهُ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَ اِنَّا عَلٰى ذَهَابٍۭ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾

(23-18) We sent down water from the sky in right measure, and caused it to stay in the earth, [17] and We have the power to cause it to vanish [18] (in the manner We please).

(17) The water may refer to the rainfall, which comes down every now and then. It may also refer to the great store of water which Allah sent down at the time of the creation of the earth to fulfill its various needs till the Last Day, and which still exists in the shape of seas, lakes, sub-soil water, etc. It is the same water which evaporates in summer and freezes in winter and is carried by winds from place to place and spread over the earth by rivers, springs and wells to cause the growth of multitudes of things, and then is again restored to the seas, lakes, etc. Neither has this store of water been decreased by a drop nor was there any need to increase it by a drop since its creation. Today it is too well known how water comes about by the combination of oxygen and hydrogen in a certain ratio. The question is why can't more water be produced when oxygen and hydrogen still exist in abundance in the world? Who caused them to combine in the proper ratio in the beginning to produce oceans of water and who now stops them from coming together to produce an extra drop? Then when water evaporates, who causes oxygen and hydrogen to remain combined in water vapors even in the gaseous state. Do the atheists and polytheists, who believe in independent deities for water, air, summer and winter, have any answer to this question?

(18) This is to warn that Allah is able to take away the water if He so wills, and deprive the world of its most important means of life. Thus, this verse is more comprehensive in meaning than (Verse 30 of Surah Al-Mulk): Ask them, have you ever considered that if the water of your wells should sink down into the earth, who would then restore to you running springs of water?

فَاَ نۡشَ نۡاَ لَكُمۡ بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ مِّنۡ نَّخِ يۡلٍ وَّ اَ عۡنَابٍ لَكُمۡ فِ يۡهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِ يۡرَ ةٌ وَّ مِنۡهَا تَاۡ كُلُ ۙ﴿۱۹﴾

(23-19) Then through water We caused gardens of date-palms and vines to grow for you wherein you have an

abundance of delicious fruits [19] and from them you derive your livelihood. [20]

(19) That is, other kinds of fruits than dates and grapes.

(20) That is, you sustain yourselves by the produce that you get from these gardens in the shape of fruit, corn, wood, etc.

وَ شَجَرَةً تَخۡرُجُ مِنۡ طُوۡرِ سَيۡنَآءَ تَنۡۢبُتُ بِالدُّهۡنِ وَ صِبۡغٍ لِّلۡاٰكِلِيۡنَ ﴿۲۰﴾

(23-20) And We also produced the tree which springs forth from Mount Sinai, [21] containing oil and sauce for those that eat.

(21) That is, the olive-tree, which is the most important product of the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. The olive-tree can last for 2,000 years or so, so much so that some trees in Palestine are said to be existing since the time of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). It has been attributed to Mount Sinai probably for the reason that the area whose well known and prominent place is Mount Sinai is its original habitat.

وَ اِنَّ لَكُمۡ فِى الۡاَنۡعَامِ لَعِبۡرَةً ؕ نُسۡقِيۡكُمۡ مِّمَّا فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِهَا وَ لَكُمۡ فِيۡهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيۡرَةٌ وَّ مِنۡهَا تَاۡكُلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾

(23-21) And indeed there is also a lesson for you in cattle. We provide you with drink out of what they have in their bellies; [22] and you have many other benefits in them: you eat of them,

(22) That is, milk. Refer to (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 66 and E.N. 54) thereof.

وَ عَلَيۡهَا وَ عَلَى الۡفُلۡكِ تُحۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾

(23-22) and are carried on them and also on ships. [23]

(23) The benefits of cattle as means of conveyance have been mentioned here along with the ships, because in Arabia,

camel was used mainly for this purpose, and has been called the ship of the desert for the same reason.

وَ لَقَدۡ اَ ۡسَلۡنَاۡ نُوۡحًا اِلٰی قَوۡمِهٖ فَقَالَ یٰقَوۡمِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اِلٰهٍ غَیۡرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

(23-23) We sent Noah to his people, (24) and he said: "My people! Serve Allah; you have no deity other than He. Do you have no fear?" (25)

(24) See also (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 59-64); (Surah Yunus, Ayats 71-73); (Surah Hud, Ayats 25-48); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 3)and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 76-77).

(25) That is, are you not afraid that if you set up partners and associates with Allah, Who is the real Sovereign, and worship and submit to them, you shall incur His wrath and punishment?

فَقَالَ الۡمَلَؤُا الَّذِیۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ قَوۡمِهٖ مَا هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثۡلُكُمۡ ۙ یُرِیۡدُ اَنۡ یَّتَفَضَّلَ عَلَیۡكُمۡ ؕ وَ لَوۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَنۡزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً ۖ مَّا سَمِعۡنَا بِهٰذَا فِیۡۤ اٰبَآئِنَا الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

(23-24) But the notables among his people had refused to believe, and said: "This is none other than a mortal like yourselves (26) who desires to attain superiority over you. (27) Had Allah wanted (to send any Messengers) He would have sent down angels.(27a) We have heard nothing like this in the time of our forebears of old (that humans were sent as Messengers).

(26) There has been a common deviation that a human being cannot be a Prophet, and a Prophet cannot be a human being. That is why the Quran has refuted this wrong conception over and over again, and has stated forcefully that all the Prophets were human beings and that a human being only could be sent as a Prophet to human beings. For details, see (Suras Al-Araf Ayats 63, 69); (Yuonus, Ayat 2); (Hud, Ayats 27-31); (Yousuf, Ayat 109); (Ar- Raad, Ayat 38); (Ibrahim, Ayats 10-11); (An-Nahl, Ayat 43), (Bani Israil, Ayats 94-95); (Al-Kahf, Ayat 110); (Al-Anbiya, Ayats 3, 34); (Al-Muminun, Ayats 33-34, 47); (Al-Furqan, Ayats 7, 20); (Ash-Shuara, Ayats 154, 186); (Ya-Sin, Ayat 15), (Ha Mim Sajdah, Ayat 6) along with the relevant E.Ns.

(27) This accusation is another old objection, which has always been raised against those who tried to reform their

people. Their opponents always accused them of exploiting religion to gain domination in the land. Prophets Moses, Aaron and Jesus were accused of the same and so was Muhammad (peace be upon them all). So much so that the disbelievers of Makkah offered to make the Prophet (peace be upon him) their king, if he gave up his message.

As a matter of fact, the people who exhaust themselves in pursuit of worldly benefits and gains cannot believe that somebody in this world could also exert himself sincerely and selflessly for the sake of human welfare. They regard deceptive slogans, which they raise to capture power, and false promises, which they make day and night to bring about reforms as natural. They think that sincerity and selflessness can be employed only to deceive people and these cannot be put to any better use. That is why the epithet of power hungry for the reformers in all ages has been used by those already in power as if their own power and domination in the land was their birth right, and they were in no way blame worthy for struggling for it and achieving it. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 36)below)

In this connection, it should also be noted that all those, who try to reform the prevalent corrupt system of life, have inevitably to fight against those in power in order to establish the righteous system. That is why those with powers have always been against the Prophets and their followers, who had to dislodge the corrupt rulers. It is, however, obvious that here is a vast difference between those who want power to gain their own selfish ends and those who want it to reform their people.

(27a) This is a clear proof of the fact that Noah's people were not disbelievers in the existence of God nor did they reject Him as Lord of the universe and the angels as His obedient servants. They were only guilty of shirk: they had set up other deities as partners in God's attributes and powers and rights.

(28) "Help me because they have denied me": Take Thy vengeance on these people for they have denied me. (Verse 10 of Surah Al-Qamar) says: Then cried Noah to his Lord, I am overcome, so

take Thy vengeance on these people, and (Verses 26-27 of Noah) say: And Noah said, O my Lord, do not leave of these disbelievers any dweller upon the earth, for if Thou sparest them, they will mislead Thy servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers.

اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا رَجُلٌۢ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوۡا بِهٖ حَتّٰى حِيۡنٍ ﴿۲۵﴾

(23-25) He is a person who has been seized with a little madness; so wait for a while (perhaps he will improve)."

قَالَ رَبِّ انۡصُرۡنِىۡ بِمَا كَذَّبُوۡنِ ﴿۲۶﴾

(23-26) Noah said: "My Lord! Come to my help at their accusation that I am lying." (28)

(28) “Help me because they have denied me”: Take Thy vengeance on these people for they have denied me. (Verse 10 of Surah Al-Qamar) says: Then cried Noah to his Lord, I am overcome, so take Thy vengeance on these people, and (verses 26-27 of Noah) say: And Noah said, O my Lord, do not leave of these disbelievers any dweller upon the earth, for if Thou sparest them, they will mislead Thy servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers.

فَاَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡهِ اَنِ اصۡنَعِ الۡفُلۡكَ بِاَعۡيُنِنَا وَوَحۡيِنَا فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَمۡرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوۡرُ فَاسۡلُكۡ فِيۡهَا مِنۡ كُلٍّ زَوۡجَيۡنِ اثۡنَيۡنِ وَاَهۡلَكَ اِلَّا مَنۡ سَبَقَ عَلَيۡهِ الۡقَوۡلُ مِنۡهُمۡ وَلَا تُخَاطِبۡنِىۡ فِى الَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا ۚ اِنَّهُمۡ مُّغۡرَقُوۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾

(23-27) Thereupon We revealed to him, saying: "Build the Ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation. And when Our command comes to pass (29) and the oven boils over, take on board a pair each from every species, and also take your household except those of them against whom sentence has already been passed and do not plead to Me on behalf of the wrong-doers. They are doomed to be drowned.

(29) Some commentators think that tannur means the earth; others take it for the highest part of the earth; and still others think that the words far-at-tannur in the text have been used for the break of dawn. There are some who express the opinion that

the words have been used metaphorically for the creation of turmoil. But in view of the context, we see no reason why one should take a far fetched figurative meaning of a clear word of the Quran. It appears that a particular oven (tannur) had been earmarked for the deluge to start from, which was to all appearances an unexpected origin of the doom of the wretched people.

فَاِذَا اسۡتَوَيۡتَ اَنۡتَ وَمَنۡ مَّعَكَ عَلَى الۡفُلۡكِ فَقُلِ الۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىۡ نَجّٰىنَا مِنَ الۡقَوۡمِ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

(23-28) And then when you and those accompanying you are firmly seated in the Ark, say: "Thanks be to Allah Who has delivered us from the wrong-doing people." (30)

(30) The fact that Allah should be praised and thanked for the annihilation of those people, is a clear proof that they were the most wicked and villainous people in the world.

وَ قُلۡ رَّبِّ اَنۡزِلۡنِىۡ مُنۡزَلًا مُّبٰرَكًا وَّاَنۡتَ خَيۡرُ الۡمُنۡزِلِيۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾

(23-29) And say: "My Lord! Make my landing a blessed landing, for You are the Best of those Who can cause people to land in safety." (31)

(31) “Landing” here does not simply mean touching and resting on the land, but it also implies the sense of hospitality, as if to say: O God, now we are Thy guests and Thou alone art our Host.

اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ وَّاِنۡ كُنَّا لَمُبۡتَلِيۡنَ ﴿۳۰﴾

(23-30) There are great Signs in this story; (32) and surely We do put people to test. (33)

(32) At the conclusion of the story of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), particular attention has been drawn to the many signs in the story from which one can learn many lessons. For instance, the Prophet who invited the people to Tauhid was in the right and those who practiced and insisted on shirk and disbelief were in

the wrong and were destroyed. That the same kind of conflict, which took place between Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and his people, was going on in Makkah. Therefore, ultimately the Prophet (peace be upon him) will come out victorious over his antagonists just like Prophet Noah (peace be upon him).

(33) This can also be translated as: We had to or have to put people to the test. In each case the purpose is to warn the people that they will not be left alone after they have been granted power in the land and over good things of life, but Allah will put them to the test to see how they used their power. Whatever happened with the people of Noah was in accordance with this law, and the same will happen in future with any community which is raised to power.

ثُمَّ اَنۡشَاۡنَا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ قَرۡنًا اٰخَرِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۳۱﴾

(23-31) Then, after them, We brought forth another generation; (34)

(34) The people of Aad, who were raised to power after the people of Noah. Refer to (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 69).

فَاَرۡسَلۡنَا فِيۡهِمۡ رَسُوۡلًا مِّنۡهُمۡ اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اِلٰهٍ غَيۡرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۳۲﴾

(23-32) and We sent among them a Messenger from among themselves, saying: "Serve Allah; you have no god other than He. Do you have no fear?"

وَقَالَ الۡمَلَاُ مِنۡ قَوۡمِهِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَكَذَّبُوۡا بِلِقَآءِ الۡاٰخِرَةِ وَاَتۡرَفۡنٰهُمۡ فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا مَا هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثۡلُكُمۡ يَاۡكُلُ مِمَّا تَاۡكُلُوۡنَ مِنۡهُ وَيَشۡرَبُ مِمَّا تَشۡرَبُوۡنَ ﴿۳۳﴾

(23-33) The notables among his people who had refused to believe and who denied the meeting of the Hereafter, and those whom We had endowed with ease and comfort in this life, (35) cried out: "This is no other than a mortal like yourselves who eats what you eat and drinks what you drink.

(35) It should be noted that all those people who opposed the Messengers had three common characteristics: (1) They were the chiefs of their people. (2) They denied life in the Hereafter. (3) They were prosperous in the worldly life. Obviously, they loved the life of this world and could never conceive that their way of life, which had made them chiefs and brought prosperity, could ever be wrong. Therefore they opposed their Messengers, who took away their peace of mind, by preaching that there was a life-after-death and they shall have to render an account to Allah of what they did in this world. And this was exactly what was happening at Makkah.

وَلَئِۡ اَطَعۡتُمۡ بَشَرًا مِّثۡلَكُمۡ ۙ اِنَّكُمۡ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوۡنَ ۝٣٤

(23-34) If you were to obey a human being like yourselves, you will certainly be losers. (36)

(36) Some commentators have wrongly opined that the chiefs exchanged these remarks against the Messenger between themselves. These remarks in fact were addressed to the common people. When the chiefs felt that the message was spreading among the common people and there was a real danger that they would be influenced by the pure character of the Messenger and that their superiority then would automatically come to an end, they began to delude them by raising such objections against him. It is worth while to note that both the chiefs of the people of Noah and the chiefs of the people of Aad accused their Messengers of the lust for power but as regards to themselves, they thought that power and prosperity were their inherent rights and they were in every respect entitled to be the chiefs of their people.

(36a) These words show that the people of Aad were also not disbelievers in the existence of God. They too were involved in the sin of shirk. Refer to (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 70); (Surah Hud, Ayats 53-54); (Surah HaMim Sajdah, Ayat 14), and (Surah Al-Ahqaf, Ayats 21-22).

اَيَعِدُكُمۡ اَنَّكُمۡ اِذَا مِتُّمۡ وَكُنۡتُمۡ تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا اَنَّكُمۡ مُّخۡرَجُوۡنَ ۝٣٥

(23-35) Does he promise you that when you are dead and are reduced to dust and bones, you will be brought forth to life?

هَيۡهَاتَ هَيۡهَاتَ لِمَا تُوۡعَدُوۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾

(23-36) Far-fetched, utterly far-fetched is what you are being promised.

اِنۡ هِىَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنۡيَا نَمُوۡتُ وَنَحۡيَا وَمَا نَحۡنُ بِمَبۡعُوۡثِيۡنَ ﴿۳۷﴾

(23-37) There is no other life than the life of the world. We shall live here and here shall we die; and we are not going to be raised again.

اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا رَجُلُ ۨ افۡتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا وَّمَا نَحۡنُ لَهٗ بِمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

(23-38) This man has forged a mere lie in the name of Allah and we shall never believe what he says."

قَالَ رَبِّ ا نۡصُ نِۡ بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ ٣٩

(23-39) The Messenger said: "My Lord! Come to my help at their accusing me of lying."

قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيۡلٍ لَّيُصۡبِحُنَّ نٰدِمِيۡنَ ٤٠

(23-40) He answered: "A short while, and they shall be repenting."

فَاَخَذَتۡهُمُ الصَّيۡحَةُ بِالۡحَقِّ فَجَعَلۡنٰهُمۡ غُثَآءً ۚ فَبُعۡدًا لِّلۡقَوۡمِ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ٤١

(23-41) Then a mighty blast quite justly overtook them, and We reduced them to a rubble. (37) So away with the wrong-doing folk!

(37) Lexically, the word ghutha means the rubbish which is brought by flood waters and is deposited on the banks to rot there.

ثُمَّ اَنۡشَاۡنَا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ قُرُوۡنًا اٰخَرِيۡنَ ؕ ٤٢

(23-42) Then, after them, We brought forth other generations.

مَا تَسۡبِقُ مِنۡ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسۡتَاۡخِرُوۡنَ ؕ ٤٣

(23-43) No nation can outstrip its term, nor can it put it back.

ثُمَّ اَرۡسَلۡنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتۡرَا ؕ كُلَّمَا جَآءَ اُمَّةً رَّسُوۡلُهَا كَذَّبُوۡهُ فَاَتۡبَعۡنَا بَعۡضَهُمۡ بَعۡضًا وَّجَعَلۡنٰهُمۡ اَحَادِيۡثَ ۚ فَبُعۡدًا لِّقَوۡمٍ لَّا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ٤٤

(23-44) Then We sent Our Messengers in succession. Whenever a Messenger came to his people they rejected him, calling him a liar. Thereupon, We made each people to follow the other (to its doom), reducing them to mere tales (of the past). Scourged be the people who do not believe! (38)

(38) That is, those who do not believe in the Messengers.

ثُمَّ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مُوۡسٰى وَ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوۡنَ ۙ بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَ سُلۡطٰنٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ ﴿۴۵﴾

(23-45) Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron with Our Signs and a clear authority (39)

(39) The use of a manifest Authority along with Our signs may either mean that the signs were a clear proof that they were Messengers of Allah, or the signs may refer to all other miracles of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) than the staff, which may stand here for a clear authority, because the miracles shown by means of it were a clear proof that the two brothers had been sent by Allah.

اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَ مَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَاسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡا وَ كَانُوۡا قَوۡمًا عَالِيۡنَ ۚ ﴿۴۶﴾

(23-46) to Pharaoh and to his chiefs, but they behaved superciliously and they were haughty. (40)

(40) The words in the text may either mean: (1) They were highly arrogant and tyrannous people, or (2) They showed haughtiness and self conceit.

(40a) For explanation, see (E.N. 26).

فَقَالُوۡۤا اَنُؤۡمِنُ لِبَشَرَيۡنِ مِثۡلِنَا وَ قَوۡمُهُمَا لَنَا عٰبِدُوۡنَ ۚ ﴿۴۷﴾

(23-47) They said: "Shall we put faith in two mortals like ourselves (40a) when their people are slaves to us?" (41)

(40) The words in the text may either mean: (1) They were highly arrogant and tyrannous people, or (2) They showed haughtiness and self conceit.

(40a) For explanation, see (E.N. 26).

(41) Abid is worshiper. According to the Arabic usage, to be a worshiper and a bondsman are almost synonymous. Therefore

when the Prophets invited their people to worship Allah alone, they wanted them to worship and serve and obey none but Allah, and that is the real significance of the word ibadat. For further explanation, see (E.N. 50 of Surah Al-Kahf).

فَكَذَّبُوۡهُمَا فَكَانُوۡا مِنَ الۡمُهۡلَكِيۡنَ ۝٤٨

(23:48) So they rejected them, calling them liars, and they too eventually became of those that were destroyed. (42)

(42) For further details of the story of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 49-50); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 103-136); (Surah Younus, Ayats 75-92), (Surah Hud, Ayats 96-99), (Surah Bani Israil, Ayats 101-104), (Surah TaHa, Ayats 9-80) along with the relevant E. Ns.

وَ لَقَدۡ اٰتَيۡنَا مُوۡسَى الۡكِتٰبَ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَهۡتَدُوۡنَ ۝٤٩

(23-49) And We gave Moses the Book that people might be guided by it.

وَ جَعَلۡنَا ابۡنَ مَرۡيَمَ وَ اُمَّهٗۤ اٰيَةً وَّ اٰوَيۡنٰهُمَاۤ اِلٰى رَبۡوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَّ مَعِيۡنٍ ۝٥٠

(23-50) And We made Mary's son, and his mother, a Sign, (43) and We gave them refuge on a lofty ground, a peaceful site with springs flowing in it. (44)

(43) The wording “We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign” is very significant, because it means that neither the son of Mary nor his mother was each a separate sign, but both of them together were a sign. This verse is a clear proof that a son was born to Mary without cohabitation with a man and that Jesus had no father. For further details see (Surah Ale-Imran, Ayats 45-49); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 156, 171); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 16-35) and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 91) and the relevant E.N.s.

In this connection, it should also be noted that the case of the error in regards to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and his mother was different from the error in regard to other

Prophets, who were rejected because they were human beings. But the deviation in regard to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and his mother was that the credulous people raised them from the low position of human beings to the high rank of Godhead. On the other hand, those, who went to the other extreme accused Mary of unchastity, although they were witnesses of the miraculous birth of Jesus and had heard him speak in the cradle.

(44) Different people have mentioned different places, like Damascus, Ar-Ramlah, Jerusalem and Egypt, in regard to the plateau where Allah gave them shelter. From the Christian traditions it appears that Mary had to leave her home twice after the birth of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), first in the time of Herod when she took him to Egypt and stayed there till Herod's death, and then in the time of Archelaus when she took him to Nazareth in Galilee. (Matthew, 2: 13-23). Therefore it cannot be said with certainty to which of these two emigrations the Quran refers here. It is, however, obvious that the place of shelter was a plateau which provided them with all the necessities of life.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا ۭ اِنِّىْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ ۝۵۱

(23-51) Messengers! (45) Partake of the things that are clean, and act righteously. (46) I know well all that you do.

(45) In the preceding passage (Verses 23-50), the stories of some Prophets have been related as individuals, but in this verse all of them have been addressed together. However, it does not mean that they were present at one and the same place at the time of address. As a matter of fact, this way of address has been adopted to show that the message of all the Messengers, who came to different countries in different ages, was the same and they all belonged to one and the same community, (Verse 52). Therefore the message to one Messenger was meant to be the message for each one of them. In this verse, they have been addressed together as if they were present at one and the same place in order to emphasize this same aspect of the matter. But it is an irony that some people of this age have concluded that this verse has been addressed to those messengers who were to

come after Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is obvious that this interpretation cannot fit in the context in which the verse occurs.

(46) “Pure things” implies that they should be wholesome and must have been earned in lawful ways. Here the instruction, “eat of the pure things”, is meant to refute the theory and practice of asceticism. The Quran teaches the middle way between the life of asceticism and that of licence. The fact that the instruction, “eat of the pure things”, precedes “do righteous deeds”, is meant to impress that righteous deeds are meaningless without eating lawful provisions. The Prophet (peace be upon him) impressed this very thing by saying: O people, Allah is pure and loves pure things. Then he recited this (Verse 51) and said: A person makes a long pilgrimage in a disheveled condition and prays with raised hands, O my Lord, O my Lord, whereas he eats unlawful food, wears unlawful clothes and has been brought up on unlawful provisions. How can such a one expect that Allah will grant his prayer? (Related by Abu Hurairah).

وَ اِنَّ ۟ هٰذِ ۟ۦۤ اُمَّتُكُمۡ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۖ وَّ اَنَا رَبُّكُمۡ فَاتَّقُوۡنِ ﴿۵۲﴾

(23-52) This community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord; so hold Me alone in fear. (47)

(47) The original Arabic word ummat (community) comprises those individuals who have some basic things common among them. All the Messengers of Allah belonged to one and the same community because they had the same creed and the same religion and the same message. See also (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 130-133, 213); (Surah Ale-Imran, Ayats 19-20, 33-34, 64,79-85); (Surah An- Nisa, Ayats 150-152); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 59, 65, 73, 85); (Surah Yusuf, Ayats 37-40); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 49-59); and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 71-93) along with the relevant E.Ns.

فَتَقَطَّعُوۡۤا اَمۡرَهُمۡ بَيۡنَهُمۡ زُبُرًا ؕ كُلُّ حِزۡبٍۭ بِمَا لَدَيۡهِمۡ فَرِحُوۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾

(23-53) But people later cut up their religion into bits, each group rejoicing in what they have. (48)

(48) This is not a mere statement of a fact, but it is a link of the same argument which is being put forward from the very beginning of the Surah. The argument is this: Islam has been the real and original religion of all the Prophets from Noah to Jesus (peace be upon them all), because all of them brought and taught the same doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter. On the contrary, all the other religions are the perversions of the real and original religion, which has been tampered with in many ways. Therefore, those who are following the perverted religions are in the wrong and not the Prophet (peace be upon him) who is inviting them to the real and original religion.

فَذَرۡهُمۡ فِى غَمۡرَتِهِمۡ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

(23-54) So leave them immersed in their heedlessness till an appointed time. (49)

(49) There is a gap between (Verses 53 and 54), which has been left to the listener to fill, because the background of the whole discourse itself helps to fill it. Five years had passed since the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been inviting his people to the original religion. He had left no stone unturned to convince them by reasoning and by historical evidence that his message was based on the truth. His people had seen the practical results of the acceptance of his message and had witnessed his own high character which was by itself a guarantee that he was a trustworthy man. But in spite of all this, his people were rejoicing in their erroneous beliefs which they had inherited from their forefathers. This was not all. They had become his bitter enemies and were trying to defeat him and his message by every wicked machination.

After filling the gap, the meaning of (Verse 51) becomes quite clear. It does not mean that the Prophet (peace be upon him) should give up his preaching and leave the disbelievers to themselves. This way of address has been employed to shake and rouse the disbelievers. This verse warns them to realize that the

time was coming near when they would see for themselves that the Messenger was in the right and they were in the wrong.

اَيَحۡسَبُوۡنَ اَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمۡ بِهٖ مِنۡ مَّالٍ وَّبَنِيۡنَ ۙ ۵۵

(23-55) Do they fancy that Our continuing to give them wealth and children (means) that

نُسَارِعُ لَهُمۡ فِى الۡخَيۡرٰتِ ؕ بَلۡ لَّا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ۵۶

(23-56) We are busy lavishing on them all kinds of good? Nay, they do not perceive the reality of the matter. (50)

(50) This question has been posed as a proof of the main theme of the Surah. It is meant to remove their misconception of success, welfare and prosperity, which the disbelievers had formed to delude themselves. According to them, the one, who enjoyed the good things of life and wielded power and influence in the society, had attained success. On the other hand, the he who was deprived of these things was a failure. This misconception had involved them in another serious misunderstanding. They thought that the one who had attained success was in the right, and the beloved of Allah. Otherwise, how could he have attained all the successes? On the contrary, the one who was apparently deprived of these things was surely wrong in his creed and erroneous in his deeds, and was under the wrath of God (or gods). As this misconception is one of the greatest deviations of the materialists, the Quran has stated it and refuted it in different ways at different places and made the reality plain. For instance, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 126, 212); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 32); (Surah At- Taubah, Ayats 55, 69, 85); (Surah Yunus, Ayat 17); (Surah Hud, Ayats 3, 27-31, 38-39); (Surah Ar-Rad, Ayat 26); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 28, 32-43, 103-105); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 77-80); (Surah Ta-Ha, Ayats 131-132); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 44) along with the relevant E.Ns. In order to remove the above mentioned misconceptions one should keep in view the following.

(1) Success is a far higher thing than the material prosperity and the transitory success of an individual, community or nation.

(2) It is absolutely wrong to consider prosperity and success as a criterion of truth and falsehood.

(3) It should be noted well that this world is a place of test and trial and not a place of reward and retribution. It is true that even in this world, sometimes there is some punishment or reward, but it is on a very limited scale and even in this, there is an aspect of the test. Therefore it is an utter folly to consider material success and prosperity to be a proof that the recipient is in the right and so the beloved of the Lord, and vice versa. Moreover, the tests and trials of individuals and communities are of many varieties and a seeker after truth must understand at the outset that the worldly success or failure of the people is not the result of ultimate reward or punishment and cannot be regarded as the criterion for the right or wrong creed, morals and actions and a sign of being the beloved of God or otherwise.

(4) One must have a firm belief that truth and righteousness will ultimately gain victory over falsehood and wickedness. As regards to the criterion of truth and falsehood and right and wrong, one must judge this in the light of revelations and teachings of the Messengers, because common sense confirms the same, and it is also supported by the general conception which mankind has always had of good and evil.

(5) As a corollary of the above, it would have become clear that according to the Quran (and this is confirmed by common sense), the conception of reward and punishment should also be different from the common one. For instance, if a wicked person or community is enjoying prosperity, it is not a reward of its evil deeds but a harder test for it and it is not a blessing but the wrath of Allah. It means that Allah has decided to punish the prosperous people with a severe scourge. On the other hand, if the righteous people are suffering from hardships and afflictions, it is not a punishment from Allah but a blessing in disguise to pass them through the fire to remove impurity, if any, from the pure gold. If this hard trial is a blessing for the righteous people, it is a test for the wicked people to give them a severe punishment for the persecution of the former.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ مِّنۡ خَشۡيَةِ رَبِّهِمۡ مُّشۡفِقُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۵۷﴾

(23-57) Surely those who stand in awe for fear of their Lord, [51]

(51) That is, they do not live a carefree life devoid of the fear of God. They live in awe of Him and are fully conscious that He oversees and watches them in all their motives and actions and they are thus deterred from thinking and doing evil.

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۵۸﴾

(23-58) who have full faith in the Signs of their Lord; [52]

(52) Signs here means both divine revelations to the Prophets and the signs found in man's own self and in the universe around him. To believe in the verses of the Book is to affirm them, and to believe in the signs of human self and the universe is to affirm the realities which they point to.

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ بِرَبِّهِمۡ لَا يُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۵۹﴾

(23-59) who associate none with their Lord in His Divinity, [53]

(53) Though belief in the revelations itself ingrains the doctrine of Tauhid in the hearts, yet the believers have been warned to guard against shirk. This is because, in spite of believing in the revelations, man is inclined to commit shirk in one form or the other, for instance, in exaggerating the teachings of the Prophets and righteous people, supplicating and serving others than Allah, etc.

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ يُؤۡتُوۡنَ مَا اٰتَوۡا وَّ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ وَجِلَةٌ اَنَّهُمۡ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمۡ رٰجِعُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۶۰﴾

(23-60) who give, whatever they give in charity, with their hearts trembling at the thought that they are destined to return to their Lord; [54]

(54) This verse (60) may be elaborated like this: They serve their Lord and try their best to obey Him and do righteous deeds,

but all along they remain humble in their hearts and are not puffed up with the pride of their piety. Nay, in spite of all their good deeds, their hearts are always filled with awe that they shall have to render an account to their Lord, and they are not sure whether they will come out successful in the judgment of their Lord or not. A concrete interpretation of this verse is afforded by Umar. Although he served his Allah in a way that was exemplary, yet he was so afraid of accountability to Him that he is reported to have said before death: I shall consider it a favor, if I am neither rewarded nor punished in the Hereafter. Hasan Basri has expressed the same thing in a beautiful manner: A believer obeys Allah and is yet fearful of Him, and a hypocrite disobeys Allah and is yet fearless of Him.

أُولٰٓئِكَ يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِى الْخَيْرٰتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سٰبِقُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

(23-61) it is these who hasten to do good works and vie in so doing with one another.

وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتٰبٌ يَّنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(23-62) We do not lay a burden on anyone beyond his capacity. [55] We have a Book with Us that speaks the truth(about everyone) [56]; and they shall in no wise be wronged. [57]

(55) The enunciation of this fundamental proposition, in the context in which it occurs, is very meaningful. In the preceding passage (Verses 57-61), the characteristics of those people, who deserve true success, have been stated, and in this (Verse 62), it has been made clear that those excellent qualities can be attained by anyone who tries to achieve true success, as if to say: The conditions We have laid down for true success are within the reach of those who strive for it, for “We do not lay a burden”. Therefore if you, O disbelievers, desire to achieve true success, you should follow the example of the believers from among yourselves, who have really attained it.

(56) According to the Quran, an elaborate conduct book of every individual is being maintained accurately. This records every word he utters, every deed or act he performs, even every hidden thought and intention that he cherishes in his heart and mind. See also (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 49 and E.N. 46) thereof.

(57) That is, neither a person will be accused of and punished for something he had not done, nor will he be deprived of the full reward of a good act that he had done.

لَهَا قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّن دُونِ ذَٰلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عَامِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

(23-63) Nay, their hearts are lost in ignorance of all this; (58) and their deeds too vary from the way (mentioned above). They will persist in these deeds

(58) They are heedless that everything they are saying and doing, is being recorded in some book and that they shall have to render an account of everything.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِم بِالْعَذَابِ إِذَا هُمْ يَجْأَرُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

(23-64) until We seize with Our chastisement those of them that are given to luxuriant ways. (59) They will then begin to groan. (60)

(59) The epicureans will probably be punished in this worldly life because in the enjoyment of luxury and pleasure they forgot the rights of the other people and transgressed the prescribed limits.

(60) Juar is bellowing by a bull painfully. Here the word has been used tauntingly for a groaning person who does not deserve any mercy, as if to say: Now that you are going to be punished for your misdeeds, you have started bellowing.

لَا تَجْأَرُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّكُم مِّنَّا لَا تُنصَرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

(23-65) "Put [61] a stop to your groaning now! Surely no help shall be provided to you from Us.

(61) That is, they will be told this at that time.

قَدۡ كَانَتۡ اٰيٰتِىۡ تُتۡلٰى عَلَيۡكُمۡ فَكُنۡتُمۡ عَلٰٓى اَعۡقَابِكُمۡ تَنۡكِصُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۶۶﴾

(23-66) My Signs were rehearsed to you and you turned back on your heels and took to flight, [62]

(62) That is to say, in the worldly life you did not pay any heed to what the Messenger said. Nay, you did not even like to hear his voice.

مُسۡتَكۡبِرِيۡنَ ۖ بِهٖ سٰمِرًا تَهۡجُرُوۡنَ ﴿۶۷﴾

(23-67) behaving arrogantly, and making fun, [63] and talking nonsense (about the Book in your nightly chats)."

(63) The meeting places where the people of Makkah gathered together at night to hold consultations, to gossip and tell tales, etc.

اَفَلَمۡ يَدَّبَّرُوا الۡقَوۡلَ اَمۡ جَآءَهُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ يَاۡتِ اٰبَآءَهُمُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ۚ﴿۶۸﴾

(23-68) Did they never ponder over this Word [64] (of God)? Or has he (to wit, the Messenger) brought something the like of which did not come to their forefathers [65] of yore?

(64) That is, do they mean to imply that they reject the message because they do not understand it? Whereas the Quran is not an enigma, nor is it being presented in an incomprehensible language, nor does it deal with themes and subjects which are beyond human understanding. The fact is that they understand everything it presents, but they oppose and reject it, because they have no intention to follow and believe what it presents.

(65) That is, is the Quran presenting something which they had never heard before? No, that is not so. Allah had been sending His messages through His Prophets, who came to Arabia and in the adjoining lands and they are well acquainted with them, especially with Prophets Abraham and Ismael, and Houd, Saleh and Shoaib (peace be upon them all), who are acknowledged by them as Prophets of God, and who were not idol worshipers but enjoined the worship of One God. For further explanation, see (E.N. 84 of Surah Al-Furqan), (E.N. 5 of Surah As-Sajdah) and (E.N. 35 of Surah Saba).

أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكِرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(23-69) Or is it that they were unaware of their Messenger and were therefore repelled by him for he was a stranger to them? (66)

(66) That is, do they reject the message because Muhammad (peace be upon him), who is inviting them to it, is a stranger among them? No, this is not so, for he was born and bred among them in a noble family. He bears a pure and high character. He has been truthful, upright, trustworthy, honest and morally chaste throughout his life, He is a noble and gentle person, peace-loving and just by nature, honest in word and deed, sympathetic and helpful to the weak and poor. And they themselves testified to all this before he claimed to be a Messenger of Allah. Then he has been consistently preaching the same message from the first day of his mission. Then whatever he has preached, he has first practiced it himself and demonstrated its truth. There has been no contradiction between his word and deed. He and his followers have faithfully and honestly put into practice the message of the Quran and shown excellent results. For further details, see (E.N. 21 of Surah Al-Anam), (E.N. 21 of Surah Yunus) and (E.N. 105 of Surah Bani Israil).

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ ۚ بَلْ جَاءَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

(23-70) Or do they say that there is madness in him? (67) Nay, he has brought them the Truth and it is the Truth that most of them disdain.

(67) That is, do they reject his message because they regard Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be possessed by a jinn? No, this is also not correct, because in their hearts, they themselves regard him as a wise and sagacious person. It is therefore ridiculous to regard a man like him to be possessed by a jinn. For, such a person cannot say wise things and do noble deeds like him. How strange that a person possessed by a jinn (or having epileptic fits according to the western orientalists) should utter and recite sublime discourses of the Quran and start and guide a successful movement which should revolutionize the way of life not only of his own people but of the whole world.

وَ لَوِ اتَّبَعَ الۡحَقُّ اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَ الۡاَرۡضُ وَمَنۡ فِيۡهِنَّ ؕ بَلۡ اَتَيۡنٰهُمۡ بِذِكۡرِهِمۡ فَهُمۡ عَنۡ ذِكۡرِهِمۡ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ ؕ ۷۱

(23-71) Were the Truth to follow their desires, the order of the heavens and the earth and those who dwell in them would have been ruined. (68) Nay, the fact is that We have brought to them their own remembrance; and yet it is from their own remembrance that they are turning away. (69)

(68) This brief sentence expresses a great reality which should be understood well. The foolish people in the world generally feel offended by a person who points out the truth to them. They do not like to hear and consider the truth because it goes against their desires and interests but the truth remains the truth and cannot be changed after one's personal whims and wishes. Man is subject to the eternal and unalterable laws operating in the universe and has therefore to adjust his thinking, desires and conduct accordingly and should try to discover the truth and reality through experience, reasoning and observation. Only a foolish person can stick to and regard his personal whims, wishes and prejudices to be the reality and refuse to hear and consider any argument, however rational and scientific, simply because it goes against them.

(69) Here the word zikr means.

(1) Mention of human nature and its demands. (2) Admonition. (3) Esteem, honor and fame.
In the light of these, the full meaning of the verse will be: Your rejection of the Quran is irrational, for it contains the mention of those things which develop the best in human nature. It is an admonition that will result in your own good and well being, and it will bring esteem and honour for you in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

اَمۡ تَسۡـَٔلُهُمۡ خَرۡجًا فَخَرَاجُ رَبِّكَ خَيۡرٌ ۚ وَّ هُوَ خَيۡرُ الرّٰزِقِيۡنَ ۚ ۷۲

(23-72) Are you asking them for something? What Allah has given you is the best. He is the Best of providers. (70)

(70) This was yet another proof of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Prophethood. He was conveying the message without demanding any recompense for it, and he had no self interest in it. Nay, he had staked his business, reputation, peaceful home life, relationships with the unbelieving kindred for the success of his mission and was being ruthlessly persecuted for its sake. A selfish person could not have risked his all for the sake of only worldly motives. He would rather have exploited the racial and tribal prejudices of his people to become their ruler and leader. On the contrary, his message not only cut at the root of those prejudices but tended to destroy the very bases which helped his tribe to wield influence and authority over the polytheists of Arabia. This is an argument which the Quran has advanced again and again as a proof of the truth of the mission of the other Prophets as well. See (Surah Al-Anam, Ayat 90); (Surah Yunus, Ayat 72); (Surah Hud, Ayats 29, 51); (Surah Yusuf, Ayat 104); (Surah Ya-Seen, Ayat 21) along with the relevant E.Ns.

وَ اِنَّکَ لَتَدۡعُوۡ اِلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِیۡمٍ ﴿۷۳﴾

(23-73) You are calling them to a Straight Way,

وَ اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ لَا یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡاٰخِرَۃِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنٰکِبُوۡنَ ﴿۷۴﴾

(23-74) but those who do not believe in the Hereafter are ever prone to deviate from the Right Way. (71)

(71) This was the real reason why they were deviating from the right path. As they did not believe in the Hereafter, they thought that no account would be taken from them of what they did in this world. Therefore it did not matter whether they followed the truth or falsehood. Their only aim in life was to gratify the lusts of the flesh and gratify them in the best way possible.

وَ لَوۡ رَحِمۡنٰہُمۡ وَ کَشَفۡنَا مَا بِہِمۡ مِّنۡ ضُرٍّ لَّلَجُّوۡا فِیۡ طُغۡیَانِہِمۡ یَعۡمَہُوۡنَ ﴿۷۵﴾

(23-75) Were We to be merciful to them and remove from them their present afflictions, they would persist in their transgression, blindly wandering on. (72)

(72) The affliction alluded to in this verse was the famine which occurred in Makkah some time after the advent of Prophethood. According to Abdullah bin Masud, when the Quraish persistently refused to accept the invitation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and started putting up stiff resistance, he prayed: O Allah, help me against them with a seven year famine like the seven year famine of the time of Prophet Joseph. So a severe famine started in Makkah with the result that people were obliged to eat carrion. This famine has been alluded to in a number of Makki Surahs. For instance see (Surah Al-Anam, Ayats 42-44); (Surah Al- Araf, Ayats 94-99); (Surah Yunus, Ayats 11, 12, 21); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 112-113) and (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayats 10- 16) along with the relevant E.Ns.

وَ لَقَدۡ اَخَذۡنٰهُمۡ بِالۡعَذَابِ فَمَا اسۡتَكَانُوۡا لِرَبِّهِمۡ وَ مَا يَتَضَرَّعُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳:۷۶﴾

(23-76) (They are such) that We seized them with chastisement (and yet) they did not humble themselves before their Lord, nor do they entreat

حَتّٰۤى اِذَا فَتَحۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيۡدٍ اِذَا هُمۡ فِيۡهِ مُبۡلِسُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳:۷۷﴾

(23-77) until We opened upon them the door of a severe chastisement. Then lo, in this state they become utterly despaired of any good. (73)

(73) The Arabic word mublis is used for one whom frustration makes so desperate and obdurate that he does not hesitate to resort to any crime. The Devil has been called Iblis for the same reason.

وَ هُوَ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡشَاَ لَـكُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَالۡاَبۡصَارَ وَ الۡاَفۡـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳:۷۸﴾

(23-78) It is He Who has endowed you with the faculties of hearing and sight and has given you hearts (to think). Scarcely do you give thanks. (74)

(74) The disbelievers have been told to consider the great blessings of eyes, ears, mind and heart and use them as human beings should, and show gratitude to the Creator by accepting His Message.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ ذَرَاَكُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَاِلَیْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿۷۹﴾

(23-79) It is He Who has dispersed you all around the earth, and it is unto Him that you shall all be mustered.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ یُحْیٖ وَیُمِیْتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ الَّیْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾

(23-80) It is He Who gives life and causes death, and He holds mastery over the alternation of night and day. (75) Do you not understand this? (76)

(75) If one makes the right use of his faculties and observes these things properly, he can find the truth, for it is obvious that the great mechanism of the universe could not have come into existence by a mere accident. There must be its Creator who need not have any associates or partners and that the universe could not have been created without a purpose as a mere sport. The very existence of a wonderful, rational thinking and feeling creature, man, who has been delegated with powers, is a clear proof that his real life will not come to an end at death.

(76) Here attention is being drawn to the proof of both Tauhid and life after death, and in the other phenomena cited to the refutation of both shirk and rejection of the Hereafter.

بَلْ قَالُوْا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾

(23-81) Nay, but they say the like of what their predecessors of yore had said.

قَالُوۡۤا ءَاِذَا مِتۡنَا وَ كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّ عِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبۡعُوۡثُوۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾

(23-82) They say: "Is it that when we are dead and have been reduced to dust and bones, shall we then be raised up again?

لَقَدۡ وُعِدۡنَا نَحۡنُ وَ اٰبَآؤُنَا هٰذَا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسَاطِيۡرُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿۸۳﴾

(23-83) We were promised such things and so were our forefathers before us. All these are no more than tales of the past." (77)

(77) Their denial of the life after death implied the denial of the powers and wisdom of Allah as well.

قُلۡ لِّمَنِ الۡاَرۡضُ وَمَنۡ فِيۡهَاۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۸۴﴾

(23-84) Ask them: "Whose is the earth and those who are in it? Tell us if you know"

سَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلۡ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۸۵﴾

(23-85) They will surely say: "Allah's." Say: "Then why do you not take heed?" (78)

(78) That is, if you acknowledge this, why do you not then understand that none but Allah deserves to be worshiped and that when He has once created the earth and all the things in it, it is not difficult for Him to re-create them once again?

قُلۡ مَنۡ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ السَّبۡعِ وَ رَبُّ الۡعَرۡشِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ﴿۸۶﴾

(23-86) Ask them: "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, the Lord of the Great Throne?"

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۚ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(23-87) They will surely say: "Allah." (79) Say: "Will you not, then, fear (Allah)?" (80)

(79) See (E.N. 78 of this Surah).

(80) That is, why are you not afraid of rebelling against Him and worshiping others besides Him? Why do you not dread that one day you shall have to give an account of all your deeds to the All-Powerful Sovereign of the universe?

قُلْ لِّمَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(23-88) Ask them: "Say, if you indeed know, to whom belongs the dominion (81) over all things; (Who is it) that grants asylum, but against Whom no asylum is available?"

(81) The word malakut in the text is a strong word which combines both sovereignty and ownership. The verse therefore means: Whose is the Sovereignty and Who possesses the real ownership rights over everything?

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۚ قُلْ فَأَنَّىٰ تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

(23-89) They will surely say: "(The dominion over all things) belongs to Allah." Say: "Whence are you then deluded?" (82)

(82) In order to understand the significance of this question, we should know that the art of magic makes a thing appear different from what it really is. Thus the question will mean: Who has bewitched you that, in spite of knowing and acknowledging all these things, you do not understand the reality? Who has bewitched you that even after acknowledging Allah to be the Owner and the All-Powerful Sovereign, you set up other owners and sovereigns along with Him or make them partners with Him and worship them? Who has deluded you that you should dare to be treacherous and unfaithful to Allah knowing that none can

protect you against Him, and forget that you will be called to account for these things?

In this connection, it should also be noted that this question has a subtle meaning also. The Quraish accused the Prophet (peace be upon him) of practicing magic and sorcery. This question turns the tables on them, as if to say, O people, the man who presents the reality appears to you to be a sorcerer, while those leaders who say things against reality, against common sense and against your own convictions and beliefs, do not appear to you to be sorcerers at all.

لَقَدْ اَتَيْنٰهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ۝٩٠

(23-90) We have brought before them the Truth, and there is no doubt that they are lying. (83)

(83) They are liars because they say that others besides Allah have a share in His Godhead and that there is no life after death, because their first saying contradicts their own admission that Allah is the Owner and the Sovereign of the universe. Then their second assertion is based on the presumption that the All-Powerful Allah cannot recreate what He has created once. This is clearly a contradiction in terms.

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ وَّلَدٍ وَّ مَا كَانَ مَعَهٗ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِذًا لَّذَهَبَ كُلُّ اِلٰهٍۢ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَ لَعَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ۝٩١

(23-91) Never did Allah take unto Himself any son, (84) nor is there any god other than He. (Had there been any other gods) each god would have taken his creatures away with him, and each would have rushed to overpower the other. (85) Glory be to Allah from all that they characterize Him with!

(84) It should be, noted that this is a general refutation of the belief that Allah has a child or children, and incidentally refutes the Christian belief that Christ is the son of God. Yet even some eminent commentators confine this to the refutation of the Christian belief. Obviously, there is no reason why it was

necessary to refute the Christian belief specifically in this context, when the whole discourse has been directed towards the disbelievers of Makkah alone, who were, like the Christians, guilty of this sort of shirk.

(85) Here the argument of Tauhid is based on this principle: Had there been more than one God or partners in Godhead, there would have been serious differences, conflicts and wars among the different sovereigns and rulers. See (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 42 and E.N. 47) thereof, and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 22 and E. N. 22)thereof.

عٰلِمِ ا لۡغَیۡبِ وَ الشَّہَادَۃِ فَتَعٰلٰی عَمَّا یُشۡرِکُوۡنَ ﴿۹۲﴾

(23-92) He knows both what is visible and what is not visible. (86) Exalted is Allah above all that they associate with Him.

(86) This contains a subtle allusion to the refutation of the doctrine of intercession. See (E.Ns 85, 86 of Surah Ta-Ha) and (E.N. 27 of Surah Al-Anbiya).

قُلۡ رَّبِّ اِمَّا تُرِیَنِّیۡ مَا یُوۡعَدُوۡنَ ﴿۹۳﴾

(23-93) Pray, (O Muhammad): "My Lord, if You should bring the scourge of which they had been warned in my presence,

رَبِّ فَلَا تَجۡعَلۡنِیۡ فِی الۡقَوۡمِ الظّٰلِمِیۡنَ ﴿۹۴﴾

(23-94) then do not include me, my Lord, among these wrong-doing people." (87)

(87) This prayer does not mean that, God forbid, there was any real danger of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) also being involved in the punishment, or that if he had not invoked this prayer, he might have been involed in it. This way of address has been adopted to warn that all people should fear Allah's punishment. They should not demand it nor persist in their wickedness, if Allah gives them respite. As a matter of fact, Allah's punishment is a thing which should be dreaded not only by the sinful people but also by the righteous people, and they should all seek His refuge from it, for when the scourge of God comes, it does not destroy only the wicked people but may also involve the righteous people in it. Therefore the right course for those, who have to live in a wicked society, is that they should always pray to Allah for His refuge, for one does not know when that scourge might come down.

وَ اِنَّا عَلٰۤی اَنۡ نُّرِیَکَ مَا نَعِدُہُمۡ لَقٰدِرُوۡنَ ﴿۹۵﴾

(23-95) Surely We are able to show you what We warn them against.

اِ دۡفَ بِالَّتِیۡ ہِیَ اَحۡسَنُ السَّیِّئَۃَ ؕ نَحۡنُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا یَصِفُوۡنَ ﴿۹۶﴾

(23-96) (O Muhammad)! Repel evil in the best manner. We are well aware of all that they say about you.

وَ قُلۡ رَّبِّ اَعُوۡذُ بِکَ مِنۡ ہَمَزٰتِ الشَّیٰطِیۡنِ ﴿۹۷﴾

(23-97) And pray: "My Lord! I seek Your refuge from the suggestions of the evil ones;

وَ اَعُوۡذُ بِکَ رَبِّ اَنۡ یَّحۡضُرُوۡنِ ﴿۹۸﴾

(23-98) I even seek Your refuge, my Lord, lest they should approach me." (88)

(88) For explanation, see (E.Ns 71, 72 of Surah Al-Anam); (E.Ns 138, 150 to 153 of Surah Al-Araf); (E.N. 39 of Surah Younus); (E.N. 48 of Surah Al-Hijr); (E.Ns 122 to 124 of Surah An-Nahl); (E.Ns 58 to 63 of Surah Bani-Israil) and (E.Ns 35 to 41 of Surah HaMim-Sajdah).

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَهُمُ الۡمَوۡتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارۡجِعُوۡنِ ﴿۹۹﴾

(23-99) (They shall persist in their deeds) until when death comes to anyone of them he will say: "My Lord, send me back to the world [89]

(89) In the original text plural number has been used for Allah, which may be for reverence, or may include the angels as well, who will be seizing the criminal soul. The entreaty would be: O my Lord! Send me back.

لَعَلِّىۡۤ اَعۡمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيۡمَا تَرَكۡتُ كَلَّا ؕ اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَآئِلُهَا ؕ وَمِنۡ وَّرَآئِهِمۡ بَرۡزَخٌ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ يُبۡعَثُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۰﴾

(23-100) that I have left behind. I am likely to do good." [90] Nay, [91] it is merely a word that he is uttering. [92] There is a barrier behind all of them (who are dead) until the Day [93] when they will be raised up.

(90) It occurs at several places in the Quran that each of the criminals, after his death till his entry into Hell, and even after that, will plead again and again: Lord, send me back to the world, I will no more disobey Thee, I will now do righteous deeds. See (Surah Al-Anam, Ayats 27, 28); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 53); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 44, 45); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 102); (Surah Al-Fatir, Ayat 37); (Surah Az- Zumar, Ayats 58, 59); (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 10-12), and (Surah Ash-Shura, Ayats 44)along with the relevant E.Ns.

(91) That is, he will never be sent back nor given another opportunity, for in that case the test and trial for which man is sent to this world becomes meaningless. For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 210 and E. N. 228)thereof, and E.Ns 6, 139, 140 of Surah Al-Anaam) and (E.N. 26 of Surah Younus).

(92) That is, now, when he has met his doom, he has nothing more to say than that he should be sent back to the world; so let him say what he likes; he will never be allowed to go back.

(93) That is, now there is a barrier between them and the world, which will not allow them to go back to it. Therefore they shall remain in that state until the Day of Resurrection.

فَاِذَا نُفِخَ فِى الصُّوۡرِ فَلَاۤ اَنۡسَابَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ يَوۡمَئِذٍ وَّلَا يَتَسَآءَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾

(23-101) And then no sooner the Trumpet is blown than there will remain no kinship among them that Day, nor will they ask one another. (94)

(94) It does not mean that the father will not remain father and the son will not remain son, etc. It only means that they will not be able to help each other, nor shall they be able to inquire about each other as father and son, for each one will be worried and anxious about his own plight. See (Surah Al-Maarij, Ayats 10-14), and (Surah Abasa, Ayats 34- 37).

فَمَنۡ ثَقُلَتۡ مَوَازِيۡنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾

(23-102) It will be an Hour when those whose scales are heavy, (95) they alone will attain success;

(95) That is, those whose good deeds will be heavy and will out-weigh their evil deeds.

وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٣-١٠٣﴾

(23-103) and those whose scales are light, those will be the ones who will have courted loss. (96) They will abide in Hell.

(96) For the criterion of success and failure in the Hereafter, please refer to(E.Ns 1 and 50)above.

تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ ﴿٢٣-١٠٤﴾

(23-104) The Fire shall scorch their faces, exposing their jaws. (97)

(97) The word kalih means a face whose skin has been removed so as to expose the jaws. When somebody asked Abdullah bin Masud the meaning of kalih, he said: Haven't you seen the scorched head of a slaughtered animal?

أَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنتُم بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢٣-١٠٥﴾

(23-105) "Are you not those to whom My revelations were recited, and you dubbed them as lies?"

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿٢٣-١٠٦﴾

(23-106) They will say: "Our Lord! Our misfortune prevailed over us. We were indeed an erring people.

رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣-١٠٧﴾

(23-107) Our Lord! Take us out of this. Then if we revert (to evil-doing) we shall indeed be wrongdoers."

قَالَ اخْسَأُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ ﴿٢٣-١٠٨﴾

(23-108) Allah will say: "Away from Me; stay where you are and do not address Me. (98)

(98) “Do not speak to Me”: Do not plead your case with Me. According to some traditions, these will be their last words and they shall never be allowed to speak again, but this is contradicted by the Quran itself in the succeeding verses. Therefore, it only means this that they will not be able to plead their case again.

إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِى يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ ءَامَنَّا فَٱغْفِرْ لَنَا وَٱرْحَمْنَا وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ ٱلرَّٰحِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

(23-109) You are those that when a party of My servants said: 'Our Lord, we believe, so forgive us, and have mercy on us, for You are the Best of those that are merciful,'

فَٱتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا حَتَّىٰٓ أَنسَوْكُمْ ذِكْرِى وَكُنتُم مِّنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

(23-110) you made a laughingstock of them and your hostility to them caused you to forget Me, and you simply kept laughing.

إِنِّى جَزَيْتُهُمُ ٱلْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوٓا۟ أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ ٱلْفَآئِزُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

(23-111) Lo! I have rewarded them this Day for their steadfastness, so that they, and they alone, are triumphant." (99)

(99) This is again a reference to those who will deserve success or be doomed to failure in the Hereafter.

قَٰلَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

(23-112) Then Allah will ask them: "For how many years did you stay on earth?"

قَالُوا۟ لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسْـَٔلِ ٱلْعَآدِّينَ ﴿١١٣﴾

(23-113) They will say: "We stayed for a day or part of a day. (100) Ask of those who keep count of this."

(100) For explanation, see (Surah Ta-Ha Ayat 103 and E.N. 80) thereof.

قٰلَ اِن لَّبِثۡتُمۡ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلًا لَّوۡ اَنَّكُمۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾

(23-114) He will say: "You stayed only for a while, if you only knew that. (101)

(101) That is, Our Messengers warned you that the life in this world is transitory and is for test and trial, but you did not realize it then and denied that there was any life in the Hereafter and behaved in accordance with that belief.

اَفَحَسِبۡتُمۡ اَنَّمَا خَلَقۡنٰكُمۡ عَبَثًا وَّ اَنَّكُمۡ اِلَيۡنَا لَا تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۵﴾

(23-115) Did you imagine that We created you without any purpose, (102) and that you will not be brought back to Us?"

(102) The Arabic word abathan in the text also means “for the sake of sport”. Then the verse will mean: Did you think that We had created you merely for the sake of sport and there was no purpose behind your creation? Therefore you may eat, drink, be merry and enjoy yourself as you please.

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الۡمَلِكُ الۡحَقُّ ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الۡعَرۡشِ الۡكَرِيۡمِ ﴿۱۱۶﴾

(23-116) So, exalted be Allah, (103) the True King! There is no god but He, the Lord of the Great Throne.

(103) Allah is above this that He should create you without any purpose and that you may associate partners with Him with impunity.

وَ مَنۡ يَّدۡعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۙ لَا بُرۡهَانَ لَهٗ بِهٖ ۙ فَاِنَّمَا حِسَابُهٗ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفۡلِحُ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۷﴾

(23-117) He who invokes any other god along with Allah " one for whom he has no evidence" (104) his reckoning is with his Lord alone. (105) Indeed, these unbelievers shall not prosper. (106)

(104) It may also be translated as: The one who invokes any other deity along with Allah, has nothing to support him in this act.

(105) That is, he cannot escape accountability.

(106) Again, the reference is to those who will attain the success and to those who will be deprived of it.

وَ قُ لل رَّبِّ اغۡ فِ رۡ وَ ارۡ حَ مۡ وَ اَنۡ تَ خَ يۡ رُ الرّٰحِمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱۸﴾

(23-118) And say, (O Muhammad): "My Lord, forgive us and have mercy on us, for You are the Best of those that are merciful." (107)

(107) Compare and contrast this prayer with (Verse 109). Here the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been told to make the same prayer as contained in (Verse 109), as if to say, You (and your followers) should supplicate Allah with the same prayer so that, if the people scoff at you, they themselves might provide a proof of a strong case against themselves.